

Entrepreneurship Is Open to All

Jonathan Ortmans speaks at the Global Entrepreneurship Conference in March 2014.

Credit: UnleashingIdeas.org

Global Entrepreneurship Week, November 17-24, is a collection of interconnected startup communities across the world, devoted to the notion that all boats rise on an incoming tide. That's according to Jonathan Ortmans, the president of this annual enterprise, which unfolds this year in 140 countries.

0. Ortmans, who started his own company at the age of 19, offers these guidelines for the up-and-coming businessperson.

What are five reasons that 2014 is the best time to start a business?

0. 1. Startup communities are stronger than ever. They provide entrepreneurs with resources, inspiration, peer support, networking events and more.
2. Entrepreneurs can access many online free education tools, such as the [Kauffman Founders School](#), the [Khan Academy](#) entrepreneurship series and [EdX](#).
3. Entrepreneurs can implement business ideas with less initial capital today, using new technology and platforms.
4. Business creation is no longer a matter of pedigree, family or elite education. Entrepreneurship is open to all.
5. Customers are more open to new solutions. Many early adopters are willing to provide entrepreneurs with the feedback to fine-tune products or services.

What are four qualities required to be a successful entrepreneur?

1. Entrepreneurs are sustained by their passion in the pursuit of success, even when the odds are against them.
2. Successful entrepreneurs know how to effectively collaborate and communicate with others, which are crucial skills for marketing ideas, building teams, seeking financial backing and other critical startup activities.
3. Successful entrepreneurs understand the value of a support system in their community and aren't afraid to utilize it.
4. Successful entrepreneurs have previous experience in the sector they are entering.

What are three pieces of advice for new entrepreneurs?

1. Wait to seek outside capital. You'll build a nimble business by standing it up on your own and finding advice from mentors rather than investors. Evaluate why and when to raise money, as well as the consequences of accepting outside funding.
2. Build the right team. Each member of a startup team should bring new, complementary skills to the table while sharing the passion for the idea.
3. Test the vision continuously. Validate your idea, keeping your startup lean, improving your concept, measuring success, learning and ... doing it all again.

Learn more about [Global Entrepreneurship Week](#) and the [Global Entrepreneurship Summit](#). 

This article is condensed from the original version appearing in [The Eurooptimist.eu](#).

Nigerian Entrepreneur Makes Shoes, One Pair at a Time

"Follow your dreams with courage, imagination and the ability to attract and work with the best minds."


Credit: Niyi Omodara



Niyi Omodara, a young entrepreneur and member of the YALI Network, is the founder, designer and principal craftsman of Extra Valuable Apparel (EVA), a footwear company in Akure, Nigeria. He is a self-taught craftsman who started making slippers for his family in the early 1990s. Omodara is now producing "bespoke" shoes, customized for a client and made to order. His vision for EVA is to "manufacture world-class leather products through superior designs and quality materials."

Could you describe your business to the YALI Network?

Omodara: EVA shoes are distinct because they are comfy, trendy and neater than all other Nigerian handmade shoes. I both design and create shoes for individual customers. Our products are sold largely by word-of-mouth, one customer to the next, through social media and wherever I can find customers. Each month we produce in the range of 35-50 pairs of customized shoes. That comes to about 450-480 pairs per year.

EVA produces more than 450 pairs of 
custom-made shoes per year in Akure,

Nigeria.

Credit: Niyi Omodara

How many people do you employ?

Omodara: Presently, I have two staff members and two trainees. One person assists me in shoe production alongside the trainees, while the second staff person works mainly on the branding, marketing and delivery of orders to our customers.

We are working hard to get more motivated [employees] in the production section. Finding skilled and dedicated workers is hard, but we are optimistic.

What are your goals for this business?

Omodara: I'm constantly updating my business plan, but these are my overall goals:

1. To become Nigeria's hallmark for locally made products, especially in the leather manufacturing industry. I hope EVA can achieve this with an individualistic approach to customer satisfaction and service and by using the highest-quality materials.
2. To be a global player in shoe manufacturing from Africa by the year 2035. To achieve that, it becomes more obvious by the day that we will have to partner with international shoe-manufacturing factories to scale up production significantly. At that level, my role will largely be design, quality assurance, general supervision and marketing.
3. To continuously attract, train and retain the best minds and hands in order to fulfill the earlier mentioned goals.

One of the shoe designs available from 

EVA

Credit: Niyi Omodara

What advice do you give to others hoping to start a small business?

Omodara: Follow your dreams with courage, imagination and the ability to attract and work with the best minds. Focus intently on your goals. Loyalty, commitment and passion for the job are critical virtues, technical skills apart.

Are there any special obstacles for entrepreneurs and small-business persons in Nigeria?

Omodara: Yes, there are plenty of them:

- 1) The lack of a consistent, reliable energy supply is a big one in Nigeria. I generate my own power to run the factory half of the time. That required an initial investment of almost \$1,000, and about \$100 per month to maintain gasoline and service.
- 2) Access to investment capital is difficult when interest rates on bank loans run up to double figures. I started in 2011 with about \$105 in capital that I drew from savings.

3) Numbers of skilled workers are insufficient due to a general preference among young people for white-collar jobs rather than positions requiring skilled labour. The lack of skilled workers becomes a barrier to increased production for EVA.

Please briefly describe EVA's supply chain. Are raw materials locally sourced or imported?

Omodara: We buy all our raw materials in Nigeria. On the sales end, customers buy directly from us. We have contacted some of the biggest online stores in Nigeria to discuss making EVA products available, but no reply yet.

Are you a young entrepreneur? Share your experiences with the YALI Network on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

During the month of November, the YALI Network will focus on the topic of entrepreneurship, in recognition of the [Global Entrepreneurship Summit](#) to be held in Morocco November 19-21.
